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When he mounted the throne, the present king of Siam promulgated a generous law relative to slavery to celebrate his accession. This was the "Pi-Marong" law (that is to say, the law of the year "Pi-Marong," or 1880). If it had freed all the slaves in a block, it would have brought about recriminations and turned many wealthy Siamese, whose wealth lay mainly in troops of slaves, against the royal family. It therefore does not mention slaves for debt in the strict sense, and is concerned only with the status of their children and grandchildren. The former are declared to be free at the age of 21, and the latter at birth. As for the man who becomes a slave through debt, he cannot gain freedom through his work, since the latter is regarded as the equivalent of interest on the sum borrowed or the purchase price, if he should happen to change masters. If this sum is less than 56 ticals (1) in the case of men, and 48 ticals for

(1) The tical is worth 1.50 francs.

women, however, the slave is merely a debtor and can then redeem himself by his labor.

The reader will also note that this law makes no mention of slaves by capture. But the Siamese code does not recognize any such, and even levies extremely severe penalties on ravishers and sellers.

In 1893, when the Franco-Siamese treaty granted us the territory of Laos which was situated on the left bank of the Mekong, the conditions of slavery were therefore first of all what the "Pi-Marong" law, which was generally well applied, had made them, and secondly as determined by the ordinances of the code governing slave trading, which had partly failed to have any effect.

Our first concern was thus the radical suppression of the traffic [489] in human flesh, which was enriching a few Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian mandarins, and even some Burmese who were engaging in this sort of trade.

But this was not all. Once the slave trade was abolished, slavery for debt remained. It was left for our administration to regulate this question in a spirit of humanity and justice as soon as it felt sufficiently entrenched in the land and was able to begin the necessary investigations.

It is our pleasure here to pay homage to the generous sentiments and broad views of Lieutenant Colonel Tournier, then Superior Commandant of Lower Laos, [redacted] set forth the situation of slavery in Laos

567 as early as March of 1896, in a report which we believe it will be of
426 value to reproduce in part, as well as a code of rules as ingenious as they were just governing slavery for debt (1).

(1) See Appendix XXVIII.

567 Finally, there is a kind of serfdom in Laos which is applied to
563 certain Kha tribes. Thus in the kingdom of Luang-Prabang, subsequent to revolts, entire tribes of Khas were reduced to a state of serfdom and placed under the patronage of the king, of princes, or of the principal members of the nobility. In 1894 our administration undertook to liberate these Khas, who are completely free today. In southern Laos most of these latter are still the clients of a few nobles or Laotian officials, but the guardianship is a gentle one which they can abandon and resume at will.

2. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

178 Under our control, as has been noted above, the political
642 organization of Laos has remained what it was before 1893. We have respected the customs and local traditions, and we govern through the native administration in which all the machinery has been retained.

643 [490] The following is a nearly complete list of all the officials in a large Muong such as the kingdom of Luang-Prabang or of Bassac (1)

(1) The kingdom of Luang-Prabang is situated on both banks of the Mekong, but the king resides on the left bank at Luang-Prabang and is consequently dependent on the French authorities. The kingdom of Bassac is today wholly on the right bank, and the king of Bassac falls under Siamese domination. The title of king is sometimes given also to the "Tiao-Fa" or head of the province of Muong-Sing. The head of a muong in the Sib-Song-Pahn-Na may be a "Tso-boua," a "Phya-Hua" or a "Sen-Houi-Fa," depending on his importance.

At the head are the Kings, two in number:

Somdet-Phra-Tiao or Tiao-Tsi-Vite-Louang, first king, great master of existences.

644 Tiao-Maha-Oupahat or Tiao-Tsi-Vite-Vang-Na, second king, great master responsible for conservation of property. [Illustration here]

314 The bark of these varieties is lighter in color, with green, gray and red spots. The leaves are a duller green and the fruits heavier and longer.

[132] These lianas belong to the highlands of Laos and to the thick mountain forests. The Mac-ka-khay is very plentiful in Borikan; the two following ones are found in the region of Van-Vien and the Tang-tong, which is quite rare, has been found in the interior on the right bank of the Mekong, as well as in Paksan.

In the absence of botanical specimens, we can only suppose that all these varieties belong, according to the indications given as to their fruits, to the Apocyneae family.

As for the samples of rubber which we have from these plants, some in balls and others in rolls of small dimensions, they all seem to have been obtained by the method of coagulating latex with heat in a receptacle of a certain size. The gum has remained sticky, and today, after having been kept for a year, all of it except one or two samples has become soft and viscous.

I am nevertheless persuaded that two or three of these lianas will yield rubber which is as good in quality as that of Nghe-An, provided that the crop is harvested in "tears" or in threads, this being the best system for avoiding the inclusion of putrescible serum.

Moreover, the rubber produced by these lianas already constitutes a noteworthy trade commodity in the Hua-Phans. M. Chaussé, one of our countrymen, has been making sizeable purchases of rubber there for several years, and comparatively large amounts of this product are said to be marketed in Cho-Bo at the rate of 45 piasters per picul, that is to say at more than two francs per kilogram.

[426] M. Delineau, whose commercial ventures in rubber in Tran-Ninh have also been brought to light, has bought wax and rubber there and tried to make the population accept loans which would be repayable in rubber.

314 654 But disadvantages are already arising in these regions--disadvantages of which the cascarilleros, or seekers of cinchona trees, once set a bad example in Brazil. Since the elastic gum is coming more and more into demand in Upper Laos, in some places the natives have hacked and massacred the producing plants in order to obtain the coveted merchandise more easily and in larger quantities.

Since this habit shows a tendency to become widespread, in Muong-Son M. Montpeyrat has drawn up restrictive measures against these clumsy procedures. And in order at the same time to encourage cultivation of these plants which yield a desirable product, he has

567 must be specified in a special contract signed by them. In this case
656 their work will go toward payment of their parents' debt at the rate of six ticals per year for boys and four ticals for girls.

ART. 5. If a slave dies his debt is considered paid and is not transferable to any of his relatives.

[651] ART. 6. A master is held responsible for payment of the head tax on any dutiable slave.

If the latter cannot secure the necessary sum through his own labor the master shall pay, but any such sum shall be added to the principal debt and mention thereof shall be made on the contract of debt by the authorities responsible for collecting the head tax.

•426 ART. 7. Any individual who borrows money shall present him-
567 self with the lender to the highest native authority in his territory, who alone is empowered to certify debtor's notes.
656 The native authorities shall retain a duplicate of such debtor's notes; such notes shall be signed by both lender and borrower and invested with the seals of the authorities.

Notes shall be drawn up in ink and any crossings-out or additions approved.

ART. 8. For sums less than twenty ticals, the high authorities of a Muong may delegate their powers to the Tassengs or Phobans.

ART. 9. The provisions of this decree shall take effect immediately. Sons and grandsons of slaves for debt who have reached or passed the age of fifteen shall be regarded as free upon promulgation of these provisions. The same shall be true of persons under contract against their will, who shall have the right to have the contract which binds them revised in the presence of the French authorities.